

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC HONOLULU

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 1996

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TH

SUBJ: STATUS OF GOVERNMENT FORMATION

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: BANGKOK 1927

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE DEMOCRATS SEEM DESTINED TO FORM A MINORITY COALITION WITH SOCIAL AGRARIAN. THAI NATION CURRENTLY STANDS EMBARRASSED AND ALONE IN THE COLD. SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY LEADERS ARE AT ODDS WITH EACH OTHER ON WHAT POLICY THEIR PARTY SHOULD TAKE TOWARD THE DEMOCRATS. THE MAJOR REMAINING QUESTION MARK IS WHO WILL FILL THE DEFENSE MINISTER'S POST. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE DEMOCRAT AND SOCIAL AGRARIAN PARTIES APPARENTLY

INTEND TO FORM A GOVERNMENT WITHOUT THE PARTICIPATION OF THAI NATION. DEMOCRAT PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL THAMMANUM THIANNGOEN ANNOUNCED FEBRUARY 3 THAT PARTY LEADER SENI PRAMOT INTENDS TO ASK FIVE INCUMBENT MINISTERS TO STAY ON. THEY ARE FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN ITSARANGKUN NA AYUTTHAYA, COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER CHAO NA SINLAWAN, INTERIOR MINISTER LUANG ATTHASIT SITTHISUNTHON, STATE UNIVERSITIES MINISTER KASEM SUWANNAKUN, AND PUBLIC HEALTH MINISTER UDOM POSAKRITSANA. SENI WILL ALSO INVITE DEPUTY EDUCATION MINISTER KO SAWATPHANIT TO STEP UP TO MINISTER. SOCIAL AGRARIAN PARTY LEADER SAWET PHIAMPHONGSAN WOULD BECOME DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND FINANCE MINISTER. ANOTHER PROMINENT SOCIAL AGRARIAN, SAWAT KHAMPRAKOP, WOULD BECOME MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATIVES. THAMMANUN GAVE NO NAMES FOR DEFENSE OR INDUSTRY. GENERAL KRIT SIWARA HAS INSISTED THAT WHOEVER GETS THE DEFENSE PORTFOLIO MUST BE A MILITARY MAN. THE DEMOCRATS APPARENTLY HAVE NO QUARREL WITH THIS "REQUEST", BUT WITH CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN OF THAI NATION CURRENTLY OUT OF THE PICTURE, THE DEMOCRATS MAY HAVE TO LOOK ELSEWHERE.

2. THAI NATION, MEANWHILE, CONTINUES TO TRY TO CHANGE ITS PUBLIC IMAGE AND POSITION. PRAMAN ADIREKSAN SAYS THAT HE, PERSONALLY, HAS NO OBJECTIONS TO LUANG ATTHASIT AS INTERIOR MINISTER, BUT THAT THE DEMOCRATS HAVE NOT YET CONTACTED HIM TO DISCUSS THEIR DIFFERENCES. HE CONTINUES TO INSIST THAT HE WILL NEGOTIATE ONLY WITH SENI PRAMOT AND THAT SENI MUST COME TO HIM. THE THAI AND ENGLISH PRESS HAS BEGUN CRITICISING THAI NATION'S STUBBORNESS AS UNPATRIOTIC AND SELF-SERVING. PRAMAN, IN TURN, ACCUSES THE DEMOCRATS OF MISREPRESENTING HIS PARTY'S POSITION AND TRYING TO GIVE IT A BAD NAME.

3. THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY IS ALSO HAVING PROBLEMS IN PRESENTING A RATIONAL AND STABLE FRONT TO THE PUBLIC. AN EMBASSY POLITICAL ASSISTANT WHO ATTENDED A SOCIAL JUSTICE PRESS CONFERENCE ON FEBRUARY 4 REPORTS THAT DEPUTY LEADER OF THE PARTY, DR. NIPHON SASITHON, AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PARTY, BUNLOET LOETPRICHA, TOOK DIFFERENT POSITIONS ON A POSSIBLE COALITION WITH THE DEMOCRATS DURING THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFERENCE. NIPHON WAS WILLING TO CONSIDER JOINING THE DEMOCRATS IN ORDER TO FORM A MAJORITY COALITION. BUNLOET, HOWEVER, WOULD HAVE NO PART OF SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT. HE BELIEVES SOCIAL JUSTICE SHOULD TRY TO FORM A MAJORITY COALITION WITHOUT THE DEMOCRATS. JOURNALISTS AND OTHER PARTY OFFICIALS ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE COMMENTED THAT SUCH DIFFERENCES SURFACING EVEN DURING A PRESS CONFERENCE SUGGEST DEEP SPLITS WITHIN THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY.

4. COMMENT: THAI NATION HAS PLAYED ITS CARDS POORLY
ALL ALING, CULMINATING IN PRAMAN'S CURRENT POSITION THAT
SENI MUST COME TO SEE HIM. THAI NATION NOW LOOKS
IRRESPONSIBLE IN THE EYES OF THE PUBLIC. IN THE PROCESS
IT HAS FURTHER TARNISHED THE IMAGE OF ALL CONSERVATIVES
OF THE OLD SCHOOL, AND HAS HELPED CREATE GREATER SYMPATHY
FOR THE DEMOCRATS.
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